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STAMPS AND • STAMP COLLECTING.



BY

PERCY W. BERRY,

(Proprietor of the Onslow packets.)

AUCKLAND.

—MDCCCXCI—

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Stamps & Stamp-Collecting.

THE first person who ever made use of a post-paid envelope was a Frenchman named M. de Telayor, who lived in the reign of Louis XIV. This gentleman, acting under royal authority, established, in 1653, a private penny post in Paris, placing reception boxes at the corners of streets, and arranging with certain people to deliver the contents regularly. Those making use of these boxes were only allowed to use the royal post-paid envelope. This system, however, seems to have died out with its originator.

On this idea later suggestions may or may not have been built. Dr. Gray, of the British Museum, claims the merit of having suggested that letters should be prepaid with stamps as early as 1834. Before that time, Mr. Charles Knight proposed a stamped cover for the circulation of newspapers. Of course no steps were taken in respect to either of these recommendations till the period of penny postage. The credit of suggesting the postage stamp has, to a considerable extent, fallen to Sir Rowland Hill, but, after a minute enquiry, it has been found the actual inventor of the adhesive postage stamp was the late Mr. James Chalmers, then living in Dundee, Scotland. The date of his invention was August, 1834. Sir Rowland Hill's famous pamphlet on Post Reform went through three editions rapidly. In this pamphlet the prepayment of letters, by means of stamps, was definitely recommended by the author. When the Committee of the House of Commons met to investigate the merits of Mr. Hill's postage scheme, they were to express an opinion as to the desirability or otherwise of prepayment by means of stamps. A favourable opinion was given of the measure, and when the Government brought in and passed the Penny Postage Act, a clause for the use of stamps formed a component part of it. Though all agreed that stamps of some sort should come into use with the advent of cheap postage, it was by no means easy to hit upon a definite plan, or, when a number of plans were submitted, to decide upon the particular one to be adopted. Stamped paper representing different charges was first suggested, but after some discussion, it was decided that stamped envelopes should be the prepaying medium. Plans and suggestions for the carrying out of the arrangement being required at once, the Lords of the Treasury issued a somewhat pompous proclamation dated the 23rd of August, 1839, inviting "all artists, men of science, and the public in general" to offer proposals "as to the manner in which the stamp may best be brought into use." So important was the subject that Lord Palmerston, then Foreign Secretary, was directed to apprise all foreign governments of the matter, and invite suggestions from any part of the civilized world. Three months were allowed for plans, and one prize each of £200 and £100 were to be allowed for the proposals on the subject "which my Lords may think most deserving of attention." The palm was carried off by Mr. Mulready, R.A., who

designed the envelopes now known by his name. These envelopes, which allegorically celebrated the triumph of the post in a host of emblematical figures, were of two colours, the one for a penny being printed in black, and the other for the two-penny postage being in blue ink. They gave, however, so little satisfaction, and were found to be so inconvenient, that at the end of six months they were withdrawn from use. The Mulready envelopes are regarded as great curiosities by stamp-collectors, and are now-a-days so very scarce that there are not more than three or four in the whole of the Australasian Colonies.

Before the postage envelope was finally withdrawn from use, the Treasurer issued another prospectus, offering a reward of £500 for the best design and plan for a simple postage label. It was made a condition that the stamp should be simple, handy, and adhesive, and of a design which would make forgery difficult, if not impossible. About a thousand designs were sent in, but not one was chosen. Eventually the ugly black stamp, said to be the joint production of some of the officers of the stamp and post offices, was decided upon and brought into use. Two years afterwards, this black stamp was changed to brown, and then to red, with a view to make the obliterating process more perfect, and the better to detect the dishonesty of using old stamps. The colour of this stamp remained red for about thirty years. The twopenny stamp has been from the first blue. For eight long years (1840-48) the British people may be said to have enjoyed a complete monopoly in postage. Towards the close of 1848, they were introduced into France, and subsequently into every civilized nation in the world. The royal portrait is in most cases the prevailing design; exceptional cases occur, in which eagles, crosses, caps of liberty, and coats of arms appear. In a few cases the stamp simply bears in figures the value of the label. The portrait of our Queen appears on nearly 350 varieties of stamps. It was not until the year 1863 that the postage stamp penetrated into the Ottoman Empire, where, as Mohammedan usage will not admit of his portrait being presented, the stamps are designed so as to show a fac-simile of the Sultan's signature. The first complete set of postage stamps issued in the United States of America was the issue of 1869 of from one cent to 90 cents, although they had had stamps there some years previously.

WE NOW COME TO STAMP COLLECTING AND PHILATELY.

Most people think that Philately and Stamp Collecting mean the same thing, but they are really mistaken. The word Philately is derived from two Greek words, namely Philos, dear or friend; and *áralia*, free of, tax or charge, prepaid. Freely rendered, Philately means a friend or lover of prepayment, generally in reference to Postage Stamps. A Philatelist is a person who makes a study of his stamps; who, when he gets a new variety, studies the engraving, design and colour of it. He

issued, among the Nations, its commercial and industrial resources ; its principal pastimes and Religion and the power of its Army and Navy. In fact he finds out all that he can about it. A Stamp Collector is one who collects and arranges Foreign Stamps in an Album. What I am going to say now, is in defence of these pursuits which are almost universally condemned, as wasting such a lot of valuable time on such worthless rubbish as "Old Stamps." Those who are uninitiated to the delights and amusement, combined with useful employment obtained by Foreign Stamp Collecting or the study of Philately are apt to look with wonder, not unmixed with pity upon the person who spends so much of his spare time in Collecting and Classifying little bits of post marked colored Paper, for they think that he must certainly have become demented. The first known stamp collector was a Mr. Scales of London, who in 1854, had as complete a collection as was then obtainable. He told his friends of his novel idea and Stamp Collecting was started by several eminent men in England and France. When this pursuit was about eight years of age a few prominent collectors put their heads together, and shortly after the result of their conference was conveyed to the public mind in the shape of an Illustrated Price List and Catalogue of all the then issued stamps in the world. This Catalogue was published in 1862 by Mr. Mount-Brown of London.

This publication was almost immediately followed by a more complete one, compiled and published by Dr. J. F. Gray, of the "British Museum." After the introduction, to the public of these two Catalogues, the pursuit of Stamp Collecting seemed to spring up spontaneously all over the globe. The first Magazine devoted exclusively to the interests of Stamp Collecting was published in the year 1863 and was titled "The Stamp Collectors Magazine." Upon its appearance "The Saturday Review" made the new pastime the subject of a scathing Article, ridiculing the idea most unmercifully. This was followed by an article in "Punch" in which the title of "The Knights of the Spit-upon" was given to Collectors of used Postage Stamps, and the following lines were appended to their opinion of this folly :—

"When was a folly so pestilent hit upon
As folks Running mad to collect every spit upon
Post office stamp, that's been soiled and been writ upon."

But in spite of adverse Criticism, and in spite of that far more potent weapon, Ridicule ; Stamp Collecting flourished and prospered and the boys and young men of that day who were among its first advocates are the heartiest friends it has to-day. "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm. Let us show more of it!" Now for a few questions which are often put to beginners ! "What are the benefits derived from Stamp Collecting ?" is generally the first query :—

1st.-The Instruction obtained by the study of the Philately.

2nd.-Stamp Collecting teaches and develops habits of neatness, thrift, patience, precision, and care, and guards against colour-blindness, by giving a sense of the beautiful.

often shows up traits in different persons which otherwise would be concealed.

4th.-It gives you a large acquaintance with Foreign Moneys and Languages, which are thus learned unconsciously and are thoroughly rooted in your memory.

5th.-It takes up your spare time, gives you plenty of amusement, and thus keeps you out of the streets and places of Public amusement, thereby saving your cash.

6th.-It brings one into good company, because any person who will take up and stick to an enterprize is one of whose friendship you can depend upon.

"What's the fun in it?" What's the fun in doing any thing, it is merely a new Competition, by the taking up of which you can get something new and rare which is not possessed by your friends.

"Of what good are they, are they worth anything?" To this query there are several answers. They are an investment and often prove a better way of investing money than in buying shares of bogus Companies, as stamps which are to-day worth about one shilling each will be easily sold at from five shillings to seven shillings and six pence each 10 years hence. Of this statement we have plenty of proofs, for instance take the "Mulready Envelopes" which a score of years ago could be purchased easily at five shillings, is worth about twenty-five shillings now, and that price can be got for one almost anywhere. They are also worth something because in constant demand to Stamp Collectors, and as exhibitions of the progress and civilization of the nations by whom they are used. The Stamp Collectors have an advantage over the collectors of other novelties, because of the portability of their hobby, its neatness and variety, and value in the eyes of its owner, according to the trouble he has had in obtaining his specimens. A collector of Coins requires expensive shelves and show cases, whereon to keep his collection, besides the clumsiness of them; A collector of minerals requires a whole room to exhibit his treasures in, while the collection of eggs should be discouraged as far as possible, as this hobby entails a certain degree of cruelty which it is not desirable to cultivate in our rising generations. The science of Philately is not confined to youths and children as its votaries include some of the greatest men of our day. The late Mr. T. K. Tapling M.P., for the Harborough Division, whose death is recorded in our latest English Papers had a collection which has been valued by the English experts at from £50,000 to £100,000. This gentleman has been about twenty-seven years in getting this collection together. Has this time been uselessly wasted? I think not. This collection was one of the largest in the world. The Largest Collection in the world belongs to The Berlin Museum where this pursuit is advocated as a National Science. The most valuable Collection is owned by H.R.H., The Prince of Wales, with the Duke of Edinburgh, second on the record in 1890.

Principal among the European and other Philatelists may be

Museum ; Dr. Stephan of Berlin, Gen. E. D. Townsend of U.S.; Baron Arthur. Rothschild of Paris, L. E. Chittenden U.S., Treasurer, The Late Gen. Sherman, and the Postmasters General of N.Z., and N.S.W., namely the Hon. E. Mitchelson, and the Hon. D. O'Connor.

Now for a few suggestions to beginners ! I would advise all young people who intend to start Stamp Collecting to ask their merchant friends for permission to look through their waste paper baskets once a week, valuable stamps are often obtained this way and your duplicates may be exchanged with other collectors who do the same thing, but who do not get the same variety as you do. I do not advise the collection of unpostmarked stamps entirely, as one does not collect stamps to show off the state of your purse, but to exhibit your taste and good sense. We Philatelists think no more of such a Collector than we do of the man in America who papered his Study Wall with new five dollar bills, because they looked pretty. He was an unmitigated crank, yet this story is a fact. Unused stamps should only be placed in your Album when, Postmarked specimens are unobtainable. They make a pleasant variety among several lines of heavily Postmarked Stamps. Hinge your stamps neatly in your book, do not paste or gum them in, as when pasted in they cannot be turned up to look at the water-marks and look dirty and cannot be removed if you get a better specimen and want to put it in the place of the one you have.

As to the Album for your collection it is advisable to buy a blank book if you wish to collect all sorts of Postmarked Novelties, but if you only collect Postally used Stamps, the best Album for this purpose can be had at any booksellers, at from 4/6 to 10/6 each. With care these books will last for a lifetime. The best Albums are Lincoln's with the Catalogue at the end, or Oppen's with an index for reference at the head of each page.

Stamp Collecting is one of the most beautiful and pleasing pursuits anyone can devote his spare time to, and the beautiful array of artistic stamps is a sight of which any collector may well feel proud. There are several Magazines published exclusively in the interests of Philately an index of which may be seen in a large number of Booksellers shops throughout the Colony any of whom will order one for you upon payment of the subscription in advance. I take three of these Magazines myself and shall be glad to give information to anyone in the Colony on this Subject as far as is in my power.

PERCY W. BERRY.

Wesleyan Parsonage,
Pitt Street,
Auckland.

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